

CLAIMS

1 A method of enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including
5 coded data indicative of the identity of the business card and of at least one reference point of the business card, the method including the steps of

receiving, in a computer system, indicating data from a sensing device regarding the identity of the business card and a position of the sensing device relative to the business card, the sensing device, when placed in an operative position relative to the
10 business card, sensing the indicating data using at least some of the coded data;

identifying, in the computer system and from the indicating data a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first to the second user; and

recording, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

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2. The method of claim 1 in which said request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first to the second user is associated with at least one zone of the business card and in which the method includes identifying, in the computer system and from the zone relative to which the sensing device is located, said request.

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3. The method of claim 2 which includes

receiving, in the computer system, data regarding movement of the sensing device relative to the business card, the sensing device sensing its movement relative to the business card using at least some of the coded data; and

25 identifying, in the computer system and from said movement being at least partially within said at least one zone, the request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first to the second user.

4. A method of enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the method including the steps of

5 receiving, in a computer system, data from a sensing device operated by the first user regarding the request and regarding movement of the sensing device relative to the business card, the sensing device, when moved relative to the business card, sensing the data regarding the request and generating the data regarding its own movement relative to the business card using at least some of the coded data;

10 interpreting in the computer system, said movement of the sensing device as designating the request; and

recording, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

15 5. A method of enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the method including the steps of

20 receiving, in a computer system, from a sensing device operated by the first user, indicating data regarding the request, the sensing device, when placed in an operative position relative to the business card, sensing the indicating data using at least some of the coded data;

interpreting in the computer system the indicating data as designating the request; and

25 recording, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

6. A method of enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including

coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the method including the steps of

receiving, in a computer system, data from a sensing device regarding the identity of the first user and regarding the request, the sensing device containing data
5 regarding the identity of the first user and sensing the data regarding the request using at least some of the coded data;

interpreting, in the computer system from the data regarding the identity of the first user and the data regarding the request, the request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user; and

10 recording, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

7. The method of claim 6 which includes receiving, in the computer system, data from the sensing device regarding movement of the sensing device relative to the business
15 card, the sensing device generating data regarding its own movement relative to the business card.

8. The method of any one of claims 1, 4, 5 or 6 wherein the recording of said authority is effected by recording the identity of the first user in a list of authorised users.

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9. The method of claim 8 wherein any electronic mail sent to the second user is rejected unless the sender of the electronic mail is recorded in the list of authorised users.

10. The method of any one of claims 1, 4, 5 or 6 wherein the request to authorise the
25 transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user contained on the second user's business card becomes disabled after a pre-determined period of time.

11. The method of any one of claims 1, 4, 5 or 6 wherein the request to authorise the

transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user becomes disabled after a pre-determined number of uses.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the pre-determined number of uses is one.

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13. The method of any one of claims 1, 4, 5 or 6 which includes printing the business-card on demand.

14. The method of claim 13 which includes printing the business card on a surface of a surface-defining means and, at the same time that the business card is printed, printing the coded data on the surface.

15. The method of any one of claims 1, 4, 5 or 6 in which the coded data is substantially invisible to the unaided human eye.

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16. The method of claim 1 or 6 which includes retaining a retrievable record of each business card generated, the business card being retrievable using its identity as contained in its coded data.

17. The method of claim 1 or 4 in which the sensing device contains an identification means which imparts a unique identity to the sensing device and identifies it as belonging to a particular first user and in which the method includes monitoring, in the computer system, said identity.

18. A system for enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of the identity of the business card and of at least one reference point of the business card, the system including

5 a computer system for receiving indicating data from a sensing device for identifying a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the indicating data being indicative of the identity of the business card and a position of the sensing device relative to the business card, the sensing device, when placed in an operative position relative to the business card, sensing the indicating data using at least some of the coded data, the computer system being configured to record, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

10 19. The system of claim 18 in which said request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user is associated with at least one zone of the business card.

15 20. The system of claim 18 which includes the sensing device, the sensing device sensing its movement relative to the business card using at least some of the coded data.

20 21. A system for enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the system including

25 a computer system for receiving data from a sensing device operated by the first user, the data from the sensing device regarding the request and regarding movement of the sensing device relative to the business card, the sensing device when moved relative to the business card generating the data regarding its own movement relative to the business card, the sensing device also sensing the data regarding the request using at least some of the coded data, the computer system being configured to interpret said movement as designating the request, and being configured to record, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

30 22. A system for enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user,

authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user, the system including

- 5 a computer system for receiving indicating data from a sensing device operated by the first user, the indicating data regarding the request, the sensing device when placed in an operative position relative to the business card, sensing the indicating data using at least some of the coded data, the computer system being configured to interpret the indicating data as designating the request, and being configured to record, in the computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the
- 10 second user.

23. A system for enabling a first user to obtain, using a business card of a second user, authority to transmit electronic mail to the second user, the business card including coded data indicative of a request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from
- 15 the first user to the second user, the system including

- a computer system for receiving data from a sensing device regarding the identity of the first user and regarding the request, the sensing device containing the data regarding the identity of the first user and sensing the data regarding the request using at least some of the coded data, the computer system being configured to record, in the
- 20 computer system, an authority allowing the first user to transmit electronic mail to the second user.

24. The system of claim 23 which includes the sensing device, the sensing device ~~sensing its movement relative to the business card.~~

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25. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 wherein the recording of said authority is effected by recording the identity of the first user in a list of authorised users.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein any electronic mail sent to the second user is

rejected unless the sender of the electronic mail is recorded in the list of authorised users.

27. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 wherein the computer system disables the request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user after a pre-determined period of time.

28. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 wherein the computer system disables the request to authorise the transmission of electronic mail from the first user to the second user after a pre-determined number of uses.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein the pre-determined number of uses is one.

30. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 in which the sensing device includes a marking nib.

31. The system of any one of claims 18, 21 or 22 in which the sensing device contains an identification means which imparts a unique identity to the sensing device and identifies it as belonging to a particular first user.

32. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 in which the business card is printed on a surface of a surface-defining means and in which the system includes a printer for printing the business card on demand.

33. The system of claim 32 in which the printer prints the coded data at the same time as printing the business card on the surface-defining means.

34. The system of any one of claims 18, 21, 22 or 23 in which the coded data is substantially invisible to the unaided human eye.